

CSP Program Evaluation: Winter 2019 Parent Survey

Survey Overview

As part of its federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant funding,¹ the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is required to conduct an evaluation of its grant goals and activities. In August of 2018, IDOE contracted with Chamberlin/Dunn, LLC (C/D) to conduct the evaluation. One component of the CSP project is parent/guardian perceptions of charter school options and availability, as well as their impressions of the CSP-funded schools that their child(ren) attend. In the winter of 2019, C/D, in collaboration with Department staff, designed a survey to be distributed to parents or guardians of students in eight Cohort 1 CSP-funded schools. A total of 237 parents/guardians responded to the survey.² This report presents key findings and recommendations of the survey.

Key Findings:

- 40 percent of respondents had students in elementary grades (K-5), and just over one-quarter (27 percent) had students in high school grades (9-12).
- While 22 percent of respondents heard about their child's charter school through friends or other parents, 42 percent wrote in an "other" way they heard about the school. Of these, they had attended the school before it became a charter; heard about it from internet or TV; or knew about it because it is near where they live.
- 71 percent of parents indicated their child(ren) had attended a public school immediately prior to enrolling in the charter school, while 16 percent had children that attended another charter school.
- 83 percent stated that prior to enrollment in the charter school, they knew that charter schools were free and open to the public. However, only 62 percent knew of at least one other charter school in which they could enroll their child.
- The charter school being close to home was the most common reason for enrolling in it (selected by 30 percent), followed by 23 percent indicating they liked it better than other public or private school options, and 22 percent selecting an "other" reason. "Other" responses included being drawn to the curriculum or educational philosophy and feeling that the school meets their children's needs, among additional reasons.
- Most parents (79 percent) did not participate in a lottery to enroll in the charter school. Of those who did, 96 percent felt the experience was easy or very easy.
- Overall, more than 80 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their schools' principal/leadership (88 percent), the teachers (87 percent), the

¹ For more information about CSP, visit <https://www.doe.in.gov/grants/csp-quality-counts>.

² Official response rate for the survey could not be calculated due to data collection methods. However, C/D estimates response rate at approximately 10%.

curriculum (88 percent), the afterschool activities (84 percent), and the overall school quality (86 percent).

- 78 percent of respondents would recommend their charter school to another parent or family member.

Recommendations

As noted, this survey represents a small percentage of parents/guardians at Cohort 1 CSP-funded charter schools. However, based on survey responses, the following recommendations are proposed:

- IDOE may consider working with funded charter schools to encourage more marketing about the school prior to opening or expansion. While some parents indicated they had heard about the charter school through marketing mechanisms, more frequently, parents knew about the school because it was nearby; their children had attended the school previously; or they heard about it from friends or someone from the school. As such, there may be opportunities to increase parent awareness to charter schools through external marketing and messaging.
- While 83 percent of respondents were aware that charter schools are free and open to the public prior to enrolling in one, less than two-thirds (62 percent) were aware of other charters in which their children could enroll. IDOE may consider mechanisms for broadly publicizing charter schools as one of many school options, as well as sharing details on how to gain more information about charter schools, should parents be interested in them.

Limitations of the Survey

Limitations of the survey should be noted when interpreting results. They include:

- *Convenience Sampling:* The results of the survey are based on a convenience sample – a subset of parents/guardians in CSP-funded schools who elected to respond to a voluntary survey. Parents/guardians who elected to respond may or may not be representative of the broader group of parents in CSP-funded or other charter schools.
- *Limited/Unknown Response Rate:* The survey was offered to all parents/guardians of students in 2019 CSP-funded charter schools. However, because the link was sent to parents/guardians by school leaders, the specific number of individuals (parents/guardians) invited to respond was not tracked. As such, it is not possible to obtain a clear response rate. Based on estimations (as described in the Introduction), the response rate is estimated at 10 percent. Therefore, the results of the survey may not represent the broad view of parents/guardians in these (or other) charter schools.
- *Over/Under-representation of Schools:* The survey link was offered to parents/guardians of students in all Cohort 1 2019 CSP-funded charter schools. However, because it was the parents' choice whether to respond, some schools may be over- or under-represented in survey responses.